

ADVENTURES OF
SAMMY SASSAFRAS

↓ CARL WATERMAN ↓



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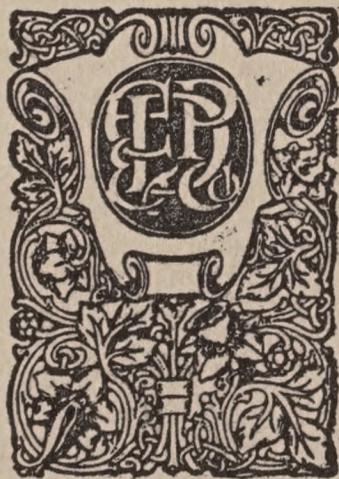


Frontispiece

ADVENTURES OF SAMMY SASSAFRAS

BY
CARL WATERMAN

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TO
My Children

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ADVENTURES OF
SAMMY SASSAFRAS

Adventures of Sammy Sassafras

CHAPTER I

SAMMY GOES HUNTING

THE farm where Sammy lived was many miles from the village. The road ran through the woods and it took Sammy's father half a day to drive to the village and back in the farm wagon drawn by his big white horse.

In those days it was very quiet in the country; no automobiles went by and not even the whistle of a railroad train sounded in the distance. But to a little boy who loved the meadows and the

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woods the summer days around Sammy's house were full of life and fun.

Bob White, the little brown quail, called from the corn field and rose with a great whirr of wings when you crept up close to get a look at him. Grasshoppers danced all day in the long grass by the road and the chipmunks raced along the stone walls or sat up straight and still to watch you with their little beady eyes.

Sammy was a freckled little boy who stood up very straight on his strong little legs. He held up his head and looked you in the face when you spoke to him. When he told you something, you knew that it was true; and he was the best brother in the world to his little sister Sally.

Sammy and Sally played together all

about the farm; sailing boats on the spring in the pasture, where the water bubbled up among the dead leaves at the bottom; down at the brook in the big meadow to scare out the speckled trout from under the banks; over at the edge of the woods to gather raspberries that grew along the stone wall. They knew every last place on that big farm where there was any fun to be had.

Sammy was six years old when things worth telling about began to happen to him. It all began one evening when he and Sally went a long way down the quiet road to the place where a Wood Road ran off to the left under the pine trees.

Sammy wondered what a little boy might find if he went ever so far down that Wood Road. Perhaps a big black

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bear might step out of the bushes and a little boy might shoot him if he had a gun and bring home a bear skin to surprise his mother. But it was time for supper then and Mother had told them to come right back. Sammy took Sally by the hand and together they ran home to supper.

Next morning Father and Mother drove off to the village. Sally was sitting between them on the seat of the new buggy.

When they were gone Sammy went out into the kitchen and stood looking for a long time at his father's big gun hanging over the fireplace. Ever since he woke up that morning, Sammy had been thinking about the Wood Road. There must surely be a bear somewhere in those deep woods.

Finally he brought a chair to the fireplace, stood up on it, and lifted down the heavy gun. Then he took one of the shiny metal percussion caps out of a paste-board box that stood on the mantel. He had watched his father often enough to know what to do. He pulled back the hammer of the gun until it clicked once, looked to see that there were little black grains of powder in the nipple where the hammer struck when you pulled the trigger, pressed the percussion cap down over them, put the gun over his shoulder and went out of the kitchen door.

He walked down the path between his mother's flower beds, opened the white gate and stepped out into the road.

Then for the first time he stopped to think. Father probably wouldn't want

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him to take the gun, but he had taken it now and would have to tell Father about that, anyway. Besides, they couldn't be very angry with a little boy who brought home a bear skin to make a new rug for the sitting room.

So Sammy trudged off down the dusty road in the warm summer sunlight with the gun over his shoulder.

It seemed a long way to the Wood Road. When he got past the big meadow, and the trees began, it was shady, but the gun hurt his shoulder, and he was getting tired. Presently, the trees grew thicker, so that only patches of sunlight sifted through, and at last he saw ahead of him the Wood Road, running off to the left among the dark pine trees.

When he got there, Sammy sat

down to rest. It was cool and sweet under the trees. The ground was soft with pine needles and the smell of the deep woods was strong and pleasant. Sammy leaned back against a tree and laid the gun across his knees like a picture he had once seen of a hunter beside a camp-fire. When he was rested and cool, he jumped up, picked up his gun and started down the Wood Road, watching and listening at every step.

The Wood Road wound among the trees and rose gradually till Sammy found himself walking along the top of a little ridge. On both sides he could look down deep into the woods. A cool breeze rustled through the branches.

The woods were full of little friendly noises. Sammy forgot all about hunting bears and probably couldn't have

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told you why he was carrying the heavy gun.

At an open place among the trees where the sun shone through beside the road, Sammy found a great patch of blueberry bushes. He dropped his gun at once and for the next ten minutes was busy eating enough blueberries to fill one of his mother's big blueberry pies.

When he had eaten all he could, he stepped back into the Wood Road. And then his heart gave a tremendous jump.

Just beyond the blueberry patch something big and black came crashing through the bushes, burst out into the Wood Road and trotted slowly toward him.



There was no doubt about it; it was a bear!
A big black one.

There was no doubt about it; it was a bear! A big black one.

Sammy was a brave little boy. The bear was about a hundred feet away when Sammy picked up the gun and pulled back the trigger until it clicked again. He braced his legs far apart, lifted the gun to his shoulder and tried to hold it straight at the bear.

It was too heavy. The gun wobbled about and, try as he would, he couldn't hold it up. He stood his ground, although his heart was hammering with fright, and he tried again to raise the heavy gun and hold it steady.

The bear was close now. He shuffled along with his nose to the ground and Sammy could see the dead leaves stir with his breath.

All at once the bear stopped short,

raised his head and saw Sammy. For a moment he stared at Sammy and Sammy stared at him. Then suddenly, he stood up on his hind legs, tall as a man, swaying and balancing with his big front paws.

The fright and surprise of that were too much for Sammy. He dropped his gun and jumped backward. A stick caught between his legs and the next moment he lay sprawling on his back in the middle of the Wood Road.

The bear stepped forward and picked up the gun. He took off the percussion cap, let down the hammer, looked severely at Sammy and shook his head.

“Well! Well! young man,” said the bear, “what does all this mean?”

Sammy didn't say anything; he



“Well! Well! young man,” said the bear, “what does all this mean?”

couldn't seem to think of anything that would add much to the conversation.

Mr. Bear tucked the gun under his arm.

"Come," said he, "you have blueberry stains on your pants and there is probably pitch among those pine needles. If you children would take a little care of your clothes, you would save your parents a great deal of trouble," and he sighed deeply.

He took Sammy by the arm and helped him to his feet. With his big paw he brushed the dirt carefully from Sammy's clothes and then taking him by the hand, led him off down the Wood Road. Sammy trotted along beside him without a word.

Mr. Bear walked along very well on his hind legs. He swayed just a little

from side to side, and his big feet came down far apart with a soft, heavy sound among the dead leaves. Once in a while his long thick fur brushed against Sammy's shoulder. Sammy, as he trotted along, kept looking up at him. Mr. Bear was fat and big. He looked very old, somehow, and dignified and wise. Once he looked down at Sammy just as Sammy was looking up at him, and his eyes twinkled.

Sammy kept tight hold of his paw. Mr. Bear seemed to be just the sort of person whose paw a little boy would like to take hold of and go somewhere.

They had gone only a short distance when they came to a little clearing among the trees at the right of the Wood Road. It looked like a place where an old house might once have stood many

years ago. At the farther end stood an old crooked apple tree and there were yellow summer Pippins lying on the thick green grass.

Mr. Bear stopped under the apple tree.

“Sit down,” said he, “you must be tired.” Sammy sat down with his back against the apple tree, and Mr. Bear stood up the gun beside it.

“Have an apple,” said Mr. Bear. “They’re very good.”

Sammy picked up an apple. There was a little place eaten out of one side and Sammy wondered what sharp little teeth could have made those tiny narrow marks.

Mr. Bear picked up a stick and rapped sharply three times on the apple tree. It sounded hollow. Then

he walked to the end of the clearing, looked up and down the Wood Road, and came back.

Sammy sat very still. There were little openings among the bushes all round the edge of the clearing. As he looked more closely about him, Sammy saw that these openings were tiny paths running off in all directions into the woods.

Suddenly, without a sound, a sleek red fox skipped over a bush and stood in the clearing. He looked very dandy with his slim legs, black pointed ears and the white streak on his breast.

Mr. Bear nodded to him and Mr. Fox curled his tail carefully to one side and sat down. He ran out his tongue, licked his black lips and yawned.

“What are you going to do with that



Mr. Bear rapped sharply three times on the apple tree.

bad boy?" asked Mr. Fox, jerking his head toward Sammy. "I saw that whole business down by the blueberry patch."

Sammy felt very uncomfortable. He could see that he was not going to like Mr. Fox.

Mr. Bear paid no attention to Mr. Fox's question, but looked at him sternly. "Will you kindly attend to your own affairs, Mr. Fox," said Mr. Bear. "And since you know so much about everybody's business and where everybody is, you can go and hurry up the rest."

Mr. Fox yawned and snapped at a fly, but he slipped off into the woods without a word.

In a little while Sammy began to hear tiny rustling sounds all around him in the bushes. Many little animals came

quietly out of the paths and sat down about the clearing. There would be just a faint stir among the leaves and in a moment another little pair of eyes looking steadily at Sammy, without a sound. Mr. Bear nodded kindly and with dignity to each as he came.

It seemed only a few minutes before the clearing was alive with little furry bodies.

Many bright-eyed birds fluttered silently into the near-by branches and sat still. An old black crow perched on a dead limb high over Sammy's head. A plump brown partridge hopped up on a log, ruffled his neck and stretched his wings.

A fat racoon curled up close by in the grass. A big hedgehog, rustling his quills, crept into the clearing, blinking

his eyes at the sunlight. A big red woodchuck came along followed by a sly looking old skunk. A slender little weasel ran quietly to the top of a stone which lay among the grasses.

Then a big owl popped out of a hole in the very apple tree under which Sammy sat, shut his eyes against the light and seemed to go to sleep.

When Mr. Owl came out, a big gray squirrel and a little red one jumped hastily out on the farthest branches of the apple tree.

Presently a big old rabbit, with very gray whiskers and ragged fur, came out of the woods and crouched down under a bush at the edge of the clearing. Sammy noticed Mr. Rabbit particularly. He looked very timid, as though he were just ready to cry. When

Sammy looked at him, he looked away or shut his eyes and tried to creep farther back into the bushes.

Last of all came Mr. Muskrat and Mr. Mink, together. Mr. Muskrat was very fat. He looked cross and was puffing as though walking didn't agree with him. There were bits of dead leaves sticking to his whiskers and he kept trying to brush them off with his short, stumpy little paws.

There sat all the animals and birds around Sammy, and looked at him; and there sat Sammy in the middle, with his back against the apple tree and looked at them. He had never in his life seen so many animals. His heart was beating very fast, but he sat up straight and brave and said never a word.

Mr. Bear sat down beside Sammy and



There sat all the animals and birds around Sammy,
and looked at him.

cleared his throat. He looked slowly around the clearing to see that every one was in his place. The animals craned their necks, pricked up their ears and sat very still.

“This little boy,” began Mr. Bear, “came out into the woods with a gun. And I think,” he added gravely, “that he meant to shoot a bear.”

There was a long pause. Mr. Owl opened his eyes for a moment and blinked solemnly at Sammy. Mr. Fox licked his lips and grinned. The animals looked steadily at Sammy and Sammy looked as bravely as he could back at them.

“His name,” went on Mr. Bear, “is Sammy Sassafras and he lives in the white farmhouse about half a mile down the road toward the village. He has a

little sister named Sally, two years younger than he is.”

Mr. Bear stopped and thought for a moment.

“They have always been nice children,” he said thoughtfully, “and Sammy is very good to his little sister.”

Old Mr. Rabbit, from where he sat under the bushes, looked timidly at Sammy as though he wished somebody would be good to him.

“This is the first time,” added Mr. Bear, “that Sammy has been out in the woods alone.”

There was another long pause. No one said a word.

The little red squirrel on the branch over Sammy’s head nipped the tail of his big gray brother who chattered angrily and skipped to a higher limb.

Mr. Bear looked up sternly and the squirrels became still as mice.

“Now,” said Mr. Bear solemnly, “what ought to be done with a little boy who comes into the woods with a big gun to shoot animals?”

Sammy's heart sank. He was beginning to have ideas himself about what ought to be done with such a little boy. Mr. Bear seemed very big and solemn. Mr. Fox looked mean, with his yellow eyes and white teeth. The big hedgehog's bristles were like great needles and even the smallest animals had sharp white teeth.

Sammy was frightened enough, but he sat up straighter than ever, held up his chin and kept back the tears.

No one said a word. The animals looked gravely at Sammy and the birds

craned their necks and peered down at him from the branches.

It was Mr. Fox who spoke first, looking at Sammy with his narrow eyes.

“Let’s chase him through the woods,” said Mr. Fox in his sharp throaty voice, “and see how he likes it. Guess that’ll teach him a lesson.” And he grinned and snapped with his white teeth at a fly.

Sammy’s heart sank lower and his lips trembled. But he looked straight at Mr. Fox and he didn’t cry. Mr. Bear laid his big paw kindly on Sammy’s shoulder. There were tears in Sammy’s eyes but he looked up at Mr. Bear and tried to smile.

Then old Mr. Rabbit began to speak from under the bush where he sat. He had a husky little voice and spoke

quickly and timidly, looking the other way as he spoke.

“I don’t think,” began Mr. Rabbit hurriedly, “I don’t think he meant anything. You said he was a good boy, Mr. Bear—I don’t think—I don’t think——”

Mr. Rabbit’s voice grew fainter and fainter and ended in a whisper. He shut his eyes and backed farther into the bushes.

Mr. Bear stood up. He looked gravely and not unkindly at Mr. Rabbit. Then he turned to the big hedgehog who sat comfortably on the soft grass with his head on one side, listening.

“Doctor Porcupine,” said Mr. Bear, “what do you think?”

Sammy opened his eyes wide and looked at Mr. Bear in surprise. It was

the first time he had ever heard a hedgehog called a porcupine.

“Hedgehog! Hedgehog!” whispered the little red squirrel over Sammy’s head. Doctor Porcupine didn’t hear him but Mr. Bear did, and looked up quite fiercely. The red squirrel tried to make believe he was sneezing, choked, and nearly fell out of the tree.

Doctor Porcupine sat up on his hind legs and looked about him. Very slowly and deliberately he reached into a little pocket among his quills, took out a pair of horn spectacles and set them on his nose. Then he looked about him again. Everyone but the red squirrel seemed quite respectful.

“I am inclined to think,” began Doctor Porcupine in a very big voice, “I am inclined to think that this is a case

in which justice should be tempered with mercy. We should place ourselves, as it were, in loco parentis."

Sammy fairly gasped with astonishment. He had never heard such big words. He couldn't understand half of them. But Doctor Porcupine looked kind-hearted in spite of his bristling quills. Mr. Bear seemed to agree with him and kept nodding his head.

Doctor Porcupine thought for a long time before he spoke again.

"If it were left entirely to me," said he, "I should recommend a suitable reprimand followed by a period of probation to be determined in duration by the condition of the patient, or, I should say by the conduct of the defendant."

Doctor Porcupine took off his horn spectacles and put them back in his

pocket. The animals began whispering to each other all about the clearing.

Mr. Bear nodded his head solemnly.

“I thank you for your counsel, Doctor Porcupine,” said he. “I agree with you entirely and my mind is quite made up.” Even Mr. Bear seemed to use big words when he talked to Doctor Porcupine.

“And now,” said Mr. Bear, “the meeting is over. You may all go home. It’s nearly time for dinner.”

The animals and birds went so quickly and quietly that Sammy could hardly tell how they had gone. There was just a little rustling of leaves, little creeping sounds among the bushes, and a flicker of many wings between the trees.

In a few minutes they were all gone

and Sammy and Mr. Bear were alone in the clearing.

Mr. Bear tucked Sammy's big gun under his arm. They went out into the Wood Road and Sammy reached up and took hold of Mr. Bear's paw.

"I'll just carry this gun for you," said Mr. Bear; "it's pretty heavy." He looked down at Sammy and his eyes twinkled.

When they reached the end of the Wood Road, Mr. Bear gave Sammy the gun.

"Good-bye, Sammy," said Mr. Bear.

"Good-bye, Mr. Bear," said Sammy.

It was the first word he had spoken since he went into the woods. He looked at Mr. Bear and smiled.

Mr. Bear seemed to be thinking of something that he wanted to say. If

anyone so big and dignified could look shy Sammy would have said that Mr. Bear looked a little that way.

“Perhaps,” said Mr. Bear after awhile, “perhaps you might want to come into the woods again some day. And perhaps Sally might like to come with you, if it isn’t too far for her to walk.”

Sammy nodded. “I guess we would,” said he.

“If you go down the Wood Road just a little beyond the clearing,” said Mr. Bear, “you can look across a little valley and see a big hill with a pile of rocks on the side of it. That’s where I live. There’s a path leads off to the left a little farther down the Wood Road and it goes right to the door of my house.”

Sammy nodded eagerly.

“And Sammy,” said Mr. Bear, “don’t you mind Mr. Fox. Just don’t pay any attention to him—nobody does. Now you run along home.”

Sammy had already started down the road when Mr. Bear called after him again. He was still sitting in the shady entrance of the Wood Road following Sammy with his eyes.

“Does your mother let you eat molasses cookies between meals?” said Mr. Bear. Sammy turned and nodded his head vigorously. A moment later he turned to look again and wave his hand, but Mr. Bear was gone.

When Sammy got home he went into the kitchen. He could hear Mary the cook out in the wash-shed. He moved a chair up to the fireplace and hung up the gun.

Then he went out into the wash-shed and asked Mary when she expected Father and Mother and Sally. Mary was sorting clothes for ironing and said she expected them any moment.

Sammy went out into the garden at the back of the house. He found the tremendous big strawberry which he and Sally had marked for their own by sticking a twig in the ground beside it. Whenever they found an extra big one they marked it and Father left it for them. Sammy looked it over and decided that in two days more it would be dead ripe.

“I wonder,” said Sammy, “whether bears like strawberries?” He stood looking at it for a long time.

“I guess it’s no use telling Father and Mother about this,” said Sammy— “they

just *couldn't* believe it. But you wait until Sally Sassafras comes home!—I'll tell *her* something that will surprise her.”

CHAPTER II

A THIEF IN THE WOODS

IT was about ten o'clock of a fine summer morning when Sammy and Sally started on their first trip to the Wood Road. They had one of Mrs. Sassafras's best lunches in a little old-fashioned covered basket with a double handle.

When Mrs. Sassafras put up a lunch, it was sure to be a good one. The children always planned to ask her at a time when she wasn't busy, else she was likely to tell Mary, the cook, to do it. Mary meant well and was considered the best cook in that county, but she just

couldn't put up anything like such a lunch as Mrs. Sassafras.

Mrs. Sassafras had very good ideas about lunches. The sandwiches were always wrapped in lettuce leaves. She said it was the only way to keep them fresh and tasty. The apples were polished until they shone like a brass kettle. The bottle of milk usually turned out to be half cream and was wrapped in a wet napkin to keep it cool. The holes in the doughnuts were filled with pieces of maple sugar, and when you thought you were all through, you were likely to find a couple of bamberries tucked away in one corner of the basket for a surprise.

Sally kept tight hold of Sammy's hand. She had made him promise that he wouldn't let go of her the whole time

that they were in the woods. Even at that, she hoped they wouldn't meet Mr. Fox.

Sammy had told her so much about Mr. Bear that she already felt quite fond of *him*. But the first time she met him she wanted to have hold of Sammy.

They came to the Wood Road presently and turned into the cool shade under the trees.

Sammy looked about him. "Now," said he, "we might meet some of the animals any time," and his eyes sparkled. Sally drew up closer to Sammy.

They went along in silence, watching and listening. Once in a while they thought they heard rustlings and little faint sounds in the bushes. They stopped and peered into the woods but not a thing could they see.

When they got up on the ridge, and came to the blueberry patch, Sammy stopped.

“This is where I first saw Mr. Bear,” he said.

“My, but you must have been scared!” whispered Sally.

“I don’t see where they can all be to-day,” said Sammy with a sigh. “We’ll go to the clearing and if we don’t find anyone there, we’ll go on and see if we can’t find Mr. Bear’s house.”

Sally nodded; she was really too frightened to speak.

When they reached the clearing, Sammy put the lunch basket down in the shade under the old apple tree. He showed Sally all the little paths through which the animals had come into the clearing when Mr. Bear called them.

Sally peered down the paths and wondered how it would seem to see a pair of little bright eyes looking back at her.

Sammy knocked with a stick on the old apple tree and shouted to Mr. Owl, who had his house in the big hole up in the trunk, but no one answered.

“Well,” said Sammy, “I guess we’ll have to go on to Mr. Bear’s house, but first we’ll go back to the blueberry patch and get some blueberries to eat after our lunch. We can get them in my hat.”

They left their lunch basket under the tree and ran back to the blueberry patch.

It couldn’t have been more than fifteen minutes before they returned to the clearing with Sammy’s hat nearly full of blueberries.

And this is what they found.

The lunch basket with the cover thrown open was lying on one side. The sandwiches were scattered about, and the corner of one of them had been nibbled. The lettuce leaves were all gone except a little scrap or two that lay among the sandwiches. A piece had been eaten out of one of the big red apples and the other one had disappeared. The bottle of milk with the napkin half unwrapped, had been dragged under a bush. Somebody had been gnawing at the cork. The doughnuts were scattered about untouched, but of the maple sugar every piece was gone.

Sammy and Sally stopped short and stared at the remains of their lunch scattered on the grass.

“Who could have done it?” whispered Sally.

Sammy tiptoed about the edge of the clearing, looking behind the bushes. Off in the woods, he thought he heard a rustling of little feet, and then everything was still.

Suddenly there was a flash and a scurry in the top of the apple tree. A fat red squirrel ran out on the tip of a branch, chattering and laughing down at them.

He was the first animal they had seen since they came into the woods.

Sammy spoke to him very politely. “Mr. Squirrel,” said he, “do you know who stole our lunch?”

Mr. Squirrel turned a somersault, landed safely on a lower branch and winked at Sammy.

“Thief! thief! thief! thief!” chattered Mr. Squirrel. Then he put his two little paws to his fat sides and laughed and laughed.

“Who did it?” said Sammy again.

But Mr. Squirrel only “skinned the cat” on the very end of a branch, whisked his tail and made a tremendous leap into the trees at the edge of the clearing. Then he raced off among the tree-tops, and they could hear him calling, “Thief! thief! Oh, you old thief!” until he disappeared in the distance.

Sally was a growing girl and thought very highly of her meals. She sat down on the grass and began to cry.

Old Mr. Owl looked out of his hole in the apple-tree and blinked down at them.

“Do you know who did it, Mr. Owl?”

said Sammy. Mr. Owl chuckled and shook his head. Then he popped back into his hole and went sound asleep again.

Sally was still crying and Sammy thought of the blueberries. He sat down beside her and put them into her lap. Sally stopped crying at once.

When they had finished the blueberries, Sammy went and got the bottle of milk. They drank that and Sammy put the napkin back in the lunch basket.

“We’ll have to go home, now that our lunch is gone,” said Sammy. He took Sally’s hand and they started back down the Wood Road.

“Never mind,” said Sammy, “the next time we’ll go right to Mr. Bear’s house and find out who stole our lunch. He

knows everybody in the woods and they all mind him.”

Sally nodded. “There is an old thief around here somewhere,” she said.

There was no doubt about it. There certainly was a thief in the woods.

CHAPTER III

SALLY'S PINK HAIR RIBBON

“**M**OTHER,” said Sally Sassafras,
“I wish you’d let me wear my
new pink hair ribbon to-day.”

“What for, dear,” said her mother.

“Well,” said Sally, “Sammy and I are
going into the woods and we might meet
somebody.”

Mrs. Sassafras sat down in a chair and
laughed.

“Bless your heart, child,” said she,
“whom do you expect to meet in the
woods?”

But she tied the new pink hair ribbon

in a big bow at the top of Sally's head, and kissed her. Sally ran out into the garden where Sammy was waiting for her.

As they started for the Wood Road, Sammy made up his mind that this time they would go straight to Mr. Bear's house and ask him about the thief in the woods, who had stolen their lunch. They wouldn't stop anywhere until they found Mr. Bear.

But when they came to the blueberry patch they found it a hard place to pass. The sun was shining bright and warm among the blueberry bushes and the berries looked bigger and sweeter than ever—Sally hung back and looked at them longingly.

“Sammy,” said she, “I'd like a blueberry.”

Sammy stopped at once. "So would I," said he.

He made a path for Sally into the middle of the patch. Here they came to a row of red cedars and an old stone wall. Beyond that they could see more blueberry bushes. They pushed their way between the cedars and climbed the wall. Sammy, who went ahead, scratched his hands and face on the prickly branches.

When they had finished with the blueberries they scrambled back again into the Wood Road. They went past the clearing and presently, just as Mr. Bear had said, the ground sloped away to the left. They could look out between the trees across a little open valley and on the other side, with the bright summer

sun shining upon it, was the rocky hill where Mr. Bear lived.

Half way up the hill they thought they could see a big pile of rocks that seemed to be roofed over. Sammy pointed it out to Sally.

"That must be where he lives," whispered Sammy.

In a few steps more they came to Mr. Bear's path leading off from the Wood Road. Sally's heart began to beat very hard. She was really going to see Mr. Bear at last!

She smoothed her dress, took tight hold of Sammy's hand and felt of her hair to see that her new pink ribbon was standing up as a ribbon should when a little girl goes visiting.

The hair ribbon was gone!

"Oh, Sammy," she wailed, "my hair

ribbon!" Then she stopped short and got behind Sammy.

They hadn't heard a sound, but there, standing beside them in the middle of the Wood Road with a patch of sunlight shining on his sleek red coat, looking at them, stood Mr. Fox!

Sammy didn't like Mr. Fox, but he was no longer afraid of him. He was a well brought up little boy and never forgot his manners.

"How do you do, Mr. Fox," said he. "This is my little sister Sally."

He took Sally by the hand and drew her up beside him.

"Good morning," said Mr. Fox, politely enough. He dipped his tail and bowed very gracefully to Sally. Sally courtesied but said nothing.

"We've lost Sally's hair ribbon," said

Sammy. "I think it must be back in the blueberry patch where we went through the red cedars."

"It was pink," said Sally. "My very best new one."

Even Mr. Fox didn't like to hurt Sally's feelings, but he shook his head.

"I'm afraid you'll never see it again," said he kindly. "It wasn't ten minutes ago that I saw Old Mr. Rabbit sneaking through the swamp with a big pink ribbon tied around his neck."

"He wouldn't steal it, would he?" said Sally. And—"Is Old Mr. Rabbit a thief?" cried Sammy.

At that, Mr. Fox sat down in the middle of the Wood Road and laughed.

"You don't mean to say you 'didn't know that," said Mr. Fox. "I thought everyone knew *he* was an old thief. Al-

ways been a thief, as long as anyone in the woods can remember—steal anything he can lay his hands on.”

“Then it must have been Mr. Rabbit who stole our lunch the other day,” said Sammy.

Mr. Fox nodded. “Of course,” said he. “Sorry—wish I could help you—Good-bye.” And he slipped off into the bushes without a sound.

Sammy and Sally stood looking at each other for a moment in silence.

“I’m sorry about that,” said Sammy at last. “I think Mr. Rabbit meant to be kind to me that first day I came into the woods.”

He took Sally by the hand and they turned off down the narrow path to Mr. Bear’s house.

Mr. Bear’s path was very narrow and

very crooked. It wound down into the valley and then kept turning off to the right as though it would never get across to the hill on the other side. It soon brought them out from among the big trees so that they found themselves walking between birches, swamp maples and the bushes that grew thick in the valley. Presently they came to places where the path had been built up with stones and logs, and the ground on either side was wet and swampy. The breeze blowing up the valley carried the sweet smell of swamp azaleas and Sally thought she had never smelled anything so pleasant. Sammy walked ahead wondering why Mr. Bear had made such a crooked, roundabout road to his house.

At last the path turned sharp to the

left and began to go up hill among scrub oaks and rocks. As they climbed the hill Sammy looked eagerly ahead for the first sign of Mr. Bear's house. Sally was close behind him.

Suddenly she squealed and threw her arms about his neck. "Oh, Sammy! look! look!" she cried.

Sammy turned around as quickly as he could with Sally holding on to him.

Just behind them, striding along to overtake them, filling the narrow path so that he brushed against the bushes on either side, came big black Mr. Bear!

Sally could never tell how it happened, but the next thing she knew Mr. Bear had picked her up off the ground and set her on his arm. Sammy was dancing about, clapping his hands and

crying, "Oh, Mr. Bear, Mr. Bear, we've found you!"

And from that moment, when Mr. Bear picked her up in his big arms, Sally was never frightened again. She put her arms around his neck and looked down from her perch with her eyes shining.

Mr. Bear held her tight against his soft coat. He took Sammy's hand in his other big paw and they went on up the hill together.

When they came in sight of the house Mrs. Bear was standing in the open door watching them, with two little baby bears hiding behind her checkered apron. Sally held out her arms and Mrs. Bear took her and carried her into the house.

Mr. Bear's house was built by filling

in the spaces between a great mass of rocks and roofing over the top with logs and sod. There was a little window on each side and the open door looked out across the sunny valley. At the back of the room was a great fireplace and a shelf full of pots and pans. There was a big bed of spruce boughs on either side of the room, and an oak table with benches around it in the center. Around the walls was a row of bayberry candles in birch bark holders.

Mrs. Bear fetched some molasses cookies out of a stone crock in the cupboard. The baby bears had hidden under one of the big beds, but they came out when they saw the cookies. They sat in the sun on either side of the doorstep eating their cookies and watching



Mrs. Bear was standing in the open door
watching them.

Sally who sat in Mrs. Bear's lap, eating hers.

Mrs. Bear smoothed Sally's hair and tied one of her shoe laces which had come undone. Mr. Bear sat down in his easy chair by the fireplace and began showing Sammy his big corn cob pipe with an alder stem, and his embroidered pouch full of sweet fern and bayberry tobacco.

And just then Sally remembered her pink hair ribbon.

"Mrs. Bear," said Sally.

"What is it, dearie?" said Mrs. Bear.

"Do you want another cookie?"

"No, thank you, ma'am," said Sally.

"I just wanted to tell you something."

"Someone stole our lunch the other day, and now he's stolen my new pink hair ribbon. Mr. Fox saw him."

“Old Mr. Rabbit, of course!” said Mrs. Bear and Mr. Bear together.

Mr. Bear got up from his chair by the fireplace. “This has got to be stopped,” he said. “I won’t have that old thief stealing from these children. Next thing we know, he’ll steal the clothes off their backs.”

He went out of the house with Sammy and Sally and the baby bears following him. There was a patch of sweet corn growing behind the house in a level place that Mr. Bear had cleared among the rocks. A long-handled shovel and a hoe were hung on pegs under the eaves. Mr. Bear put the shovel over his shoulder. He lit his pipe and hung the tobacco pouch about his neck with a leather thong. Sammy took hold of

Mr. Bear's paw and gave his other hand to Sally.

"Come on," said Mr. Bear, "we are going to get back that hair ribbon."

They went straight up the hill back of the house. It was steep and rocky, but with Mr. Bear helping them, they got on very well. The two baby bears scrambled on at a great rate, jumping and tumbling over the rocks. When they had crossed the top of the hill and gone half way down the other side, they came to a clump of birch trees growing in a grassy hollow among the rocks. Mr. Bear stopped and laid down his shovel.

A little path ran in among the birch trees, and there, almost hidden by the over-hanging branches, was the entrance to a burrow that ran deep into

the hillside. It was Old Mr. Rabbit's house!

Farther up the hill was the other entrance to the burrow—Mr. Rabbit's back door. Mr. Bear brought a big stone and laid it over the back door so that Mr. Rabbit couldn't get out that way.

Sammy and Sally stooped down and peered into the long dark hole.

"Do you suppose he is at home?" said Sammy.

"Do you think we'll get back my hair ribbon?" whispered Sally.

Mr. Bear thumped with his paw on the ground at the entrance to the burrow, worn hard and smooth by Mr. Rabbit's feet. "Mr. Rabbit! Mr. Rabbit!" he called.

No one answered. Mr. Bear sighed



HUGH SPENCER

Mr. Bear was a great worker.

and shook his head. He laid down his pipe and tobacco pouch under a birch tree, took up his shovel and began to dig up Mr. Rabbit's house.

Mr. Bear was a great worker. The sand and gravel rattled like hail among the birches. When he came to a big stone he pulled it out with his paws and sent it flying down the hill. Sammy and Sally and the baby bears watched him, breathless with excitement.

In a short while Mr. Bear had dug up Mr. Rabbit's house a long way into the hillside, making a deep trench so that only his head showed above the top of it. Presently he stopped digging, crouched down and peered into what was left of Mr. Rabbit's burrow. Sammy jumped into the trench beside

him. Sally danced about on the edge, watching them.

This is what Sammy and Mr. Bear saw:

Old Mr. Rabbit was huddled back into the very end of his burrow. They could see his eyes shining; and, sure enough, around his neck they could just make out Sally's pink hair ribbon tied in a big bow behind his ears.

"Come, come, Mr. Rabbit," said Mr. Bear, "give me the hair ribbon and let this be a lesson to you."

Mr. Rabbit's voice came faintly out of the ground: "I won't! I won't! I won't!"

Mr. Bear sighed, took up the shovel again and dug a little farther into the hill. Then he crouched down again and reached into the burrow. He

grunted and struggled to get his arm in a little farther. His big paw just grazed the end of Mr. Rabbit's nose.

And then Old Mr. Rabbit gave up!

They could hear him whimpering down in the end of his burrow. He untied the pink hair ribbon from his neck.

"There!" he sobbed. "Take it! Take it! Take it!"

The pink ribbon came flying out of the burrow. Mr. Bear picked it up and gave it to Sally. She danced about, hugging it. Then she folded it up, put it in her pocket and kissed Mr. Bear.

Mr. Bear helped Sammy out of the trench and clambered out himself. He picked up his shovel, his pipe and his tobacco pouch. He lifted Sally to his shoulder, and all together they started back over the hill to Mr. Bear's house.

Sally patted the pink hair ribbon in her pocket and hugged Mr. Bear. Sammy and the baby bears chased each other up the hill, shouting and laughing.

But Old Mr. Rabbit sat there, all alone, in the bottom of his ruined house and cried, and cried, as though his heart would break.

CHAPTER IV

THE BUMBLEBEES' NEST

SAMMY and Sally stood in the cool, shady Wood Road and looked through the trees across the sunny valley. They could see Mr. Bear's house half way up the hill on the other side.

"I wonder," said Sammy, "why Mr. Bear made such a long roundabout path to his house."

"I wonder," said Sally, "whether we'd find any of those sweet-smelling flowers if we went right straight across the valley."

She meant the swamp azaleas that they smelled when they went through Mr. Bear's path.

If Sammy Sassafras had been a little older, and had been in the woods a little longer, he would have known why Mr. Bear had made such a roundabout path to his house; and he would have known, too, that the sweet smell of swamp azaleas meant wet feet. But there were many things about the woods that Sammy had still to learn.

He scrambled up on a rock beside the Wood Road and looked across the valley.

“It’s only a little way across,” said he to Sally, “and there’s a big white birch tree on the other side at the foot of the hill in front of Mr. Bear’s house. If we use that for a mark, we can’t get lost.”

“Can we go through the bushes?” said Sally.

“I’ll go ahead,” said Sammy, “and

help you if we come to any hard places. It isn't one-half so far as going around by the path."

He jumped off the rock, and started down into the valley with Sally close behind him.

It was easy going so long as they were among the big trees and they ran quickly down hill over the pine needles. But when they got down into the valley where the bushes grew thick, they had to go slowly. Sammy went ahead to find the easiest way for Sally.

"I can smell those flowers now," said Sally. "Can't we stop and look for them?" But Sammy shook his head.

"No," he said, "I can only just see the top of the big birch tree now, and if I lose sight of that, we may get lost."

The bushes grew thicker and thicker

so that it was hard for a little boy to push his way through them. Sammy had to stop every little while to help Sally. They scratched their hands and faces scrambling through. Sally's hair ribbon came untied, and hung down over her eyes. They stopped while she took it off and put it in her pocket.

The ground under the dead leaves was soft and muddy. They had to step on logs and the roots of the swamp maples to keep their feet dry. The logs and roots were damp and covered with moss so that they slipped and stumbled into the mud. Once, as they climbed over a slippery log, Sally fell down. A dead limb caught her dress and tore a great hole in it.

Sally was getting ready to cry.

“I want to go back,” she said, “and go around by the path.”

But Sammy knew that he couldn't find his way back. And he could still see the top of the big birch tree.

Presently they came to openings among the bushes where there were clumps of tall grass with pools of water and black mud between. They had to jump from one clump of grass to another to get across. Sometimes they slipped into the mud and water. They were wet and muddy to their knees. They were too frightened now to notice the bushes of pink and white azaleas which grew all about them. Their hands and faces were scratched and dirty. Sally was crying to herself as she scrambled along. Sammy was frightened, too, but he tried to comfort Sally.

“Don’t cry,” he said. “I’ll get out of here all right. I guess there are lots worse places than this in the woods.”

All the while he kept his eyes on the top of the big birch tree which was getting nearer all the time.

They crossed one more patch of swamp and got to the other side fairly covered with mud. Here they came to a little brook running quietly among the bushes. They jumped across it and found themselves again on dry ground among a fringe of trees growing along the edge of the swamp. The ground rose ahead of them, and they could see the trunk of the big white birch tree which had guided them across the valley.

“We’re all right now, Sally,” said

Sammy; "I can see the birch tree and the rocks at the foot of the hill."

Sally stopped crying and wiped her eyes with a very muddy pocket handkerchief. They went on and stopped under the big birch tree.

"Now," said Sammy, "we'll sit down and rest for a minute before we climb the hill. I can see the top of Mr. Bear's house from here."

"Listen," said Sally. "What a funny noise!"

Sammy listened.

"Grumble, mumble, bumble," went something that sounded very faint and far away.

"Sounds like someone talking away off in the woods," said Sammy.

And just then he felt something on his leg that stung and burned like fire.

They were standing on a bumblebees' nest under the roots of the old birch tree!

“Oh! Oh!” cried Sammy. “Bumblebees!”

“Oh! Oh!” screamed Sally and clutched Sammy by the arm.

They crashed through the bushes and ran, but it was too late. Sally was stung on both legs and on her hand and was crying at the top of her voice. Sammy had a great lump on his cheek where a big bumblebee had stung him, and his legs felt as though they were on fire.

Mr. Bear was sitting in the sun in front of his house making tops out of acorns for the bear babies, when suddenly there came from the foot of the hill such a racket as had never been heard before on that hillside. The two



Mr. Bear sprang to his feet and started down the hill.

baby Bears bolted into the house and hid under one of the big beds. Mrs. Bear came running to the door. Mr. Bear sprang to his feet and started down the hill, jumping over the rocks and crashing through the bushes. He knew where that bumblebees' nest was, just as he knew everything else in the woods, and he could tell exactly what had happened.

“I’m coming, Sammy; I’m coming, Sally!” shouted Mr. Bear.

He grabbed a dry branch in each hand to beat off the bumblebees. He could hear the children running and tumbling through the scrub oaks. In a moment he had reached them, beaten off the few bumblebees that still followed them, picked up Sammy under one big arm and Sally under the other,

crying and sobbing. He ran up the hill with them to the house, as fast as he could go.

Mrs. Bear ran out to meet them and carried Sally into the house. Sammy had stopped crying although his legs hurt him terribly, and his face was swollen so that one eye was nearly closed. Mrs. Bear walked up and down with Sally who was still sobbing and rubbing her legs. The two baby Bears came out from under the bed and sat in a corner whimpering out of sympathy.

“Run and get Doctor Porcupine, Jerry,” said Mr. Bear to one of them, and the baby Bear ran down the path along the hillside.

Doctor Porcupine lived in a pine grove which grew a little farther around



Doctor Porcupine came trotting up to the house.

the hill where the ground was sandy. In a few minutes he came trotting up to the house very much out of breath and with all his quills rattling.

“Well, well,” said Doctor Porcupine bustling into the house, “anything serious?”

Then he saw Sammy's swollen face and the big lump on Sally's hand.

“Purely local inflammation,” said Doctor Porcupine, “superficial but painful.”

Mr. Bear nodded and looked wise.

Mrs. Bear put Sally down on the edge of one of the big beds and pulled down her stockings, while Mr. Bear did the same for Sammy.

“Run down to the swamp and fetch me some of the soft black mud from the edge of the brook,” said Doctor Porcu-

pine, "and get me a handful of plantain leaves from the back yard."

Mr. Bear ran down the hill to the swamp, and the baby Bears went out into the back yard to get the plantain leaves. Sally was so surprised to see Doctor Porcupine open his shiny black case and rummage for bandages among the bottles that she forgot the pain and stopped crying.

In a few minutes Mr. Bear came back with a great ball of black mud from the swamp. He put it in a tin basin on the floor.

Doctor Porcupine took his horn spectacles out of the little pocket among his quills and set them on his nose. Then he made little poultices out of mud and laid them carefully over the bumblebee stings on Sally's legs and

hands. He placed a cool green plantain leaf over each poultice and bound it on with a little bandage woven from the soft inner bark of the red cedars. Then he bandaged up Sammy in the same way with a monstrous big poultice on the side of his face, tied on with a bandage that went twice around his head. Sally looked at Sammy and laughed. She had never seen him look so funny. Mr. and Mrs. Bear and the baby Bears laughed, too, and even Doctor Porcupine chuckled. Sammy looked at himself in a little mirror that hung beside Mrs. Bear's bed. Then he laughed hardest of all.

Doctor Porcupine's poultices had done their work well. All the pain was gone.

“The applications may be removed at

the end of one hour," said Doctor Porcupine, "and need not be repeated."

Mr. Bear carefully made a note of it with a pencil on a piece of birch bark. Doctor Porcupine took off his horn spectacles and replaced them in the little pocket among his quills. Out of another pocket he took an old shiny silver watch and looked at it.

"Must be going," said Doctor Porcupine, "important appointment in fifteen minutes. Good-day."

He nodded all around and trotted out of the door with his quills rattling and his shiny leather case bobbing at his side.

Mrs. Bear poured out a basin of warm water, and with a towel she washed Sally's hands and face, brushed her hair and tied on her hair ribbon

again. Then she washed Sammy very carefully because of his swollen face.

Mr. Bear sat down in his big easy chair beside the fireplace.

“Now,” said he, “I am going to tell you children a story, and when I’ve finished, you’ll see what reminded me of it.”

He lifted Sally up beside him on one of the arms of the chair and Sammy on the other. The two baby Bears curled up on the rug in front of the fireplace. And this is the story that Mr. Bear told them.

CHAPTER V

MR. BEAR'S STORY

“THIS story,” said Mr. Bear, “was told me by Mr. Catamount, who used to live in the range of hills beyond the next valley. He moved back farther into the woods when they built the Road and people began to settle around here. I don't think he was popular.

“Mr. Catamount had a cousin living abroad in North Africa in a piece of jungle beside a big river. He was an old bachelor Lion by the name of Bhil Snorthar, but I suppose that in this country we would have called him just

Bill Snorter. According to Mr. Cata-mount, Bill was a monstrous big, powerful Lion and a terrible hand for a fight.

“It seems that in the part of North Africa where Bill had his house, there wasn't much of anybody living—just Lions, and Tigers, and Elephants, and Hippopotamuses, and Rhinoceroses, and Giraffes, and Zebras, and Boa constrictors, and a lot of miserable insignificant Monkeys.

“Now all of these animals were mighty scared of Bill Snorter. He had picked a fight with about all of them first and last and beaten them all. It got so after a while that there wasn't anybody who dared to stand up to Bill, and he began to feel pretty lonesome and downhearted because he didn't

have anybody to fight with. He used to go through the jungle throwing out his chest and prancing around on his hind legs and telling everybody how he was the boss of the jungle and could whip anything on four legs, or on two for the matter of that, hoping that somebody would start a fight and give him a little exercise. But everybody got out of sight when he talked that way, so things were pretty dull for Bill.

“Now the parcel of Monkeys who lived in that jungle were just as fond of a fight as Bill was; only they didn’t like to be in it. They liked to sit in a safe place in the top branches of a tree and look on. So when none of the animals would fight with Bill any more, the Monkeys got to feeling pretty down-hearted, too.

“After a while they heard of an old Tiger who lived down the river a ways in another jungle, and who was mighty fond of a fight. So one day a couple of them went over there and asked him whether he wouldn't come over to their jungle the next morning and entertain Bill.

“Sure enough, the old Tiger came around bright and early the next morning. The Monkeys met him at the edge of the jungle and led him over to Bill's house. Then they climbed into the trees and called to Bill to come out and meet someone who wasn't afraid of him. Bill was just eating his breakfast, but he came out mighty quick and the fight began.

“It really wasn't much of a fight. The old Tiger was quicker than Bill,

but Bill was bigger and stronger. After they had bitten, and scratched, and cuffed each other around the clearing in front of Bill's house for about ten minutes, the old Tiger put his tail between his legs and ran. And Bill went into the house to finish his breakfast.

“The Monkeys weren't discouraged, however, and after talking it over for a while, they took a trip two days' journey up the river and brought back a great big young Rhinoceros with a sharp horn as long as your arm at the end of his nose.

“That was a pretty bad fight. At first, Bill was considerably surprised at the way the Rhinoceros fought. He just put his head down and charged at Bill like a steam engine, and Bill had to step lively to keep out of the way of

his horn. As it was, after they had fought for an hour, Bill was considerably cut up. The Rhinoceros had a terribly thick, tough skin, but after a while, Bill lit on his back, got a good hold, and bit, and clawed, and pounded him, until the Rhinoceros put his head down and charged off into the jungle as fast as he could go.

“Then Bill turned a handspring or two, just to show how good he felt, and went back into the house.

“There was just one animal left who the Monkeys thought might get the best of Bill; that was an old Elephant who lived way up north in a valley between two hills; and he was so fierce that nobody dared to go within a mile of his house. The Monkeys went and got him, finally, and one fine morning he

came crashing into Bill's jungle, nearly as big as a house, trumpeting and pulling up trees by the roots, and looking for Bill.

"I tell you, when Bill saw that Elephant coming, he was tickled almost to death. He jumped up and caught hold of a branch and chinned himself with one hand just to show how strong he was. And then they started in to fight.

"That was the most terrible battle ever seen in North Africa. The Elephant was five or six times as big as Bill, but Bill wasn't afraid of anything. They fought and trampled all day long about the jungle, tearing up the ground and breaking down trees, while the Monkeys watched them from the tree-tops, and all the other animals ran away and hid.

“Along in the afternoon they were both pretty well used up, but Bill was the fresher of the two, and he went at the Elephant harder than ever. That was too much for the big Elephant. He trumpeted so that you could hear it all over the jungle, and ran. The Monkeys pelted him with stones, and called after him that Bill Snorter was the greatest fighter in North Africa.

“The next day Bill was up bright and early, and the way he bragged about his fight with the Elephant was something terrible. He made all the other animals come together in front of his house, although they were frightened half out of their wits, while he told them about the fight and how big and strong he was.

“When he got through bragging and prancing around, and frightening the

other animals, he suddenly heard a little buzzing noise in the air over his head.

“Bill looked up, and there was a little old-fashioned African Hornet, looking as innocent as you please, but repeating over and over again in his little, mild, buzzing voice, ‘You can’t frighten me, Bill. You can’t frighten me.’

“Bill jumped up in the air and struck at the Hornet with his big paw, but missed him. The Monkeys laughed, and Bill roared with anger.

“The next thing Bill knew, he was roaring with pain. The Hornet had stung him on the end of the nose and then crawled into one of his ears and stung him again. Bill cuffed at his ear, but he only scratched his own face. He nearly turned himself inside out trying to get at the Hornet. The Hornet flew



The Monkeys laughed, and Bill roared with anger.

around and stung him on the tail just for variety, and then got into Bill's other ear.

“‘Will you give up? Will you give up?’” buzzed Mr. Hornet inside of Bill's ear.

Bill gave up.

He bolted for the river and stuck his head under the water to cool off. When he took his head out to breathe, the first thing he heard was the buzz of Mr. Hornet. Bill ran for the house, slammed the door and locked it. Mr. Hornet buzzed at the keyhole, but Bill had locked himself into his own room and was trying to crawl under the bed.

“And there hasn't been a fight in that jungle since.”

* * * *

Mr. Bear finished his story.

“I’m glad we don’t live in North Africa,” said Sally.

Mr. Bear’s eyes twinkled. “I don’t know whether the story is true,” said he, “but that is the way Mr. Catamount told it to me. He was a great hand to talk about his relatives.

“Now,” said Mr. Bear, “we’ll take off the bandages.”

There was nothing left of the bee stings but little, round, red marks. The pain and the swelling were all gone. Mrs. Bear washed off the mud with warm water, and gave them some molasses cookies.

“Now,” said Mr. Bear, “run along home, and remember to keep away from the Bumblebees and Hornets. They won’t hurt you unless you make them mad.”

Sammy and Sally went down through Mr. Bear's path and ran home along the Wood Road.

“Well,” said Sammy, “I guess I know now why Mr. Bear made such a long, roundabout path to his house instead of going through that old swamp.”

CHAPTER VI

THE ISLAND IN THE BIG POND

IT was a fine, warm morning in mid-summer, and Mr. Bear had been way down the Wood Road to the Big Pond. He was on his way home, and just at the corner where the path turned off to his house, he met Sammy and Sally, carrying their little old-fashioned basket between them.

They ran to meet him, and Mr. Bear sat down in the shade at the edge of the Wood Road. He filled his big corncob pipe from the embroidered tobacco pouch that hung about his neck.

“I’m so glad we met you, Mr. Bear,” said Sammy, as they sat down beside him, and watched him light his pipe. “Mother said we could take our lunch in the woods, and we’re looking for a nice place—a place where we’ve never been before.”

Mr. Bear puffed at his pipe, and the sweet, smelling smoke curled around his head.

“Well,” said he, “almost every place in the woods is nice.”

Sammy nodded.

“I think so, too,” said Sally, and she cuddled up to Mr. Bear.

“I’ve just been down to the Big Pond,” said Mr. Bear. “Mr. Muskrat and Mr. Mink have been quarreling again. I’m afraid I shall have to move one of them over to the brook on the

other side of the woods if they don't get along better."

"What do they quarrel about?" said Sammy.

"Well," said Mr. Bear, "Mr. Muskrat had a particularly fine coat last winter, and I guess it sort of made Mr. Mink mad. You know Mr. Mink always has the finest coat of anybody in the woods. He went around telling everybody that Mr. Muskrat was putting on airs and trying to look like him. They haven't been very good friends since. Mr. Muskrat really was too proud of that coat."

"How silly they are," said Sally.

Mr. Bear's eyes twinkled. "Yes," he said, "animals are sometimes just as silly as people."

"Why don't you go down to the Big

Pond?" said Mr. Bear. "It's fine and cool down there to-day. There's an old flat-bottomed boat that won't tip over, and a fine little island at one end of the pond. There are three big pine trees on it, and some raspberry bushes on the further side. The raspberries ought to be ripe."

"My," said Sally, "that would be fine. I've never been in a boat before."

"All right," said Mr. Bear, "I'd go with you only Mrs. Bear expects me home to lunch. Don't forget to tie your boat when you get to the island," and he went off down the path to his house.

Sammy and Sally trotted on down the Wood Road. The trees grew thicker and closer as they went along. The deep, cool shade of the spruce and hemlocks, and the strong, damp smell of the

deep woods made it a very pleasant place on a warm day. It seemed only a short way before the Wood Road turned to the left, and they came out on the edge of the Big Pond. It lay before them, smooth as glass in the middle of the woods, reflecting the blue sky and the dark spruce trees that grew about one end of it. At that end, close to the further shore, was the little island with three big pine trees. The other end was shallow, and fringed with thick bushes. Down there, they could see the top of Mr. Muskrat's summer house standing up out of the shallow water.

Some big logs had been laid out on the stones at the edge of the pond, and the boat was tied up beside them. Sammy stood on the logs and shouted to Mr. Muskrat, but no one answered.

Sally got into the boat and peered over the edge into the water. Sammy put the lunch basket into the bow, untied the rope from the big staple that was driven into one of the logs, climbed in himself and got out the oars.

Sammy had never rowed a boat before, but he was a strong little boy, and he soon found out how to pull it ahead. After a great deal of splashing, they moved slowly out on the pond.

Mr. Bear had called it "the Big Pond," but it really was rather small. After Sammy had splashed, and tugged for about ten minutes, the boat moved slowly up to the island, and grated on the gravelly shore.

Sammy pulled in the oars and jumped out on a rock. Then he helped Sally to get out, picked up the lunch basket, and

they went up on the island in the shade of the three big pine trees.

And Sammy forgot to tie the boat.

It was cool and pleasant on the island, just as Mr. Bear had said. They walked all round the edge and found the raspberries at the further end. The island was no bigger than the front yard of Sammy's house and they could see the little fish swimming about in the shallow water on the sunny side. Sammy made boats for Sally out of dry sticks.

After a while, they sat down on the pine needles and opened their lunch basket. It was one of Mrs. Sassafras's very best lunches, and Sally clapped her hand when they found the bamberrries tucked away in one corner of the basket.

When they had finished their lunch, they crossed over to the further side of

the island to pick raspberries, and then Sammy noticed for the first time that thin gray clouds were hurrying across the sky, and covering the sun. A cool wind blew across the pond, and whispered mournfully among the branches of the pine trees. The water, which had been as smooth as glass in the warm summer sunlight, was stirred into ripples, and splashed coldly among the stones around the shore.

“I think it’s going to rain,” said Sammy, “perhaps we’d better go home.” He picked up the lunch basket with one big apple which they hadn’t eaten, and they ran down to the shore where they had left the boat.

The boat was gone!

It was already quite a distance from

the island, and drifting away before the wind, with the water lapping against it.

Sammy stared at the boat, and his heart sank.

“It’s my fault,” he whispered. “Mr. Bear told me to tie it, and I forgot.”

Sally was too frightened to cry, but she felt cold all over. If you have ever been left on an island with your boat gone, the sky growing darker with the gathering clouds, the wind tossing the pine branches over your head, and the water splashing among the stones all around, you will know how Sally felt.

Sammy looked at Sally. “Please don’t cry, Sally,” he said.

He was ready to cry himself, but Sally shut her lips tight, and kept back the tears; and that made Sammy feel better.

“Perhaps Mr. Bear will come after us,” said Sammy, “he knew where we were going.”

“Let’s call to him,” said Sally, “he might hear us.”

They crossed to the other side of the island, and shouted together as loud as they could, “Mr. Bear! O, Mr. Bear!”

They called again and again, and their voices echoed around the pond, but no one answered. They went slowly back to the place where they had landed on the island. Sammy was trying to think what to do, and Sally was beginning to whimper in spite of herself. They stood looking at the drifting boat, now halfway across the pond.

Suddenly Sally caught Sammy by the arm, and pointed across the pond to the

landing where they had got into the boat.

“Look! Look!” she cried.

Something that seemed very small in the distance and very white against the dark green bushes, hopped down to the edge of the pond and sat still.

Sammy jumped up and down and waved his arms. “We’ve lost our boat,” he shouted. Before he could call again, the little figure turned and disappeared in the bushes.

Sally burst out crying, but in another minute they saw the little figure again coming along the shore between the trees.

Opposite the island, the shore ran out into a little point of land, so close to the island that you could throw a stone

across. The little figure had disappeared again into the bushes.

“He’s coming to that point of land,” said Sammy. “Who can it be?”

They had only a few minutes to wait and then they knew who it was. Old Mr. Rabbit hopped out from among the trees at the end of the point.

“O dear! O dear!” whispered Sally, “it’s that old thief who stole my hair ribbon. He won’t help us.”

But old Mr. Rabbit had hopped up on the end of a log, and was calling to them, trying to make a trumpet of his two little paws.

Mr. Rabbit’s voice was always small and weak, but Sammy could make out that he was saying something about Mr. Muskrat. And then he turned and hopped back into the woods.

Sammy danced about and clapped his hands. "He's going to get Mr. Muskrat," he cried.

"O! O!" said Sally. "I wish we had let him keep my hair ribbon."

They didn't see Mr. Rabbit again until he ran across the road where it came down to the edge of the pond at the landing. He was headed straight for the further end of the pond, and Mr. Muskrat's house.

They couldn't see what happened at Mr. Muskrat's house; it was too far across the pond. For a long time they stood watching, and then suddenly they saw the boat swing around, point straight for the island and begin to move slowly toward them over the rippling water.

“It’s coming! It’s coming!” shouted Sammy.

Sally looked about her. The pond looked more friendly already. The sky didn’t seem so dark. The noise of the wind in the pine trees, and the splash of the water among the stones didn’t sound so mournful as it had before.

Slowly the boat came nearer, and in a few minutes they could see Mr. Muskrat’s little black nose above the water with the ripples running off on either side as he swam. He had the rope in his teeth, and it was slow work for him pulling the heavy boat against the wind. But it came on steadily with Mr. Muskrat puffing, and straining, and coughing as the water got down his throat.

Sammy ran into the water up to his knees, and pulled the boat ashore.

Mr. Muskrat came up on the island puffing and panting, and very cross.

Sally tried to hug him, wet as he was, but he slipped out of her arms, shook himself, wheezed through his nose, and sat up looking at them quite fiercely.

“Can’t you let a man get his breath?” said Mr. Muskrat. “Don’t you know enough to tie your boat?”

Sammy took the hint and tied the boat with a double knot to one of the bushes that overhung the water. Then he took the apple out of the lunch basket and offered it to Mr. Muskrat.

Mr. Muskrat seemed to feel much better when he saw the apple. He sat down on the pine needles with the big red apple between his paws, and nibbled away at it.

“Guess you’ve never been on the pond before,” said Mr. Muskrat.

“No,” said Sammy, “and the next time we come, I’ll know enough to tie the boat.”

“We’d like to go home now,” he went on. “But first I’ll row you across to your house.”

He untied the boat, and Mr. Muskrat scrambled into the stern. Sammy put the apple down on the seat beside him. He helped Sally into the bow, got out the oars, and pushed off from the shore.

Mr. Muskrat sat in the stern, nibbled at his apple, and told Sammy which oar to pull. He called, “Right! Right!” or “Left! Left!” in his little squeaking voice, and Sammy splashed and tugged until they got across to Mr. Muskrat’s house.

“Good-bye,” said Mr. Muskrat. “Guess you need a few lessons in rowing.”

“I guess I do,” said Sammy. “Good-bye, Mr. Muskrat, and thank you.”

“Before you go,” said Sally, “I want to tell you that you have got the nicest overcoat in the world; nicer than Mr. Mink’s.”

Mr. Muskrat grinned all over, and his eyes sparkled. He took the big apple in his teeth, jumped over the side of the boat with hardly a splash, and disappeared under the water.

Sammy rowed back to the landing, and they climbed out on the logs.

“If we could only find Mr. Rabbit,” said Sally, “I love him even if he is a thief.”

All the way home along the Wood

Road they called and called to Mr. Rabbit, but he didn't answer.

But it was only a few days later that Mr. Bear met him, hopping down the Wood Road near the blueberry patch. He looked as shy and wistful as ever, but there was a beautiful, new pink ribbon tied around his neck. And this time he hadn't stolen it.

CHAPTER VII

OLD MR. RABBIT

THERE came a time that summer when for many days no little boy and girl came trotting down the Wood Road, laughing and calling through the woods for Mr. Bear. Every day Mr. Bear came through his long, crooked path, across the valley, and wandered up and down the Wood Road; Mr. Fox went swift and silent as a shadow through every corner of the woods, and Doctor Porcupine bustled about on his rounds, but no one had seen Sammy and Sally. All of the

animals and even the trees seemed to be waiting and listening, but no sweet, childish voices sounded through the woods.

Old Mr. Rabbit had dug himself a new house among the bushes and briars at the edge of Doctor Porcupine's grove of pine trees. Every Monday morning he went down to the brook and washed the new pink ribbon that Sally had given him. Then he dried it in the sun, and took it home and ironed it before he put it on again. He kept it looking very fresh and clean, and folded it up and put it under his pillow at night before he went to sleep.

Mr. Bear met him one morning coming back from the swamp. Mr. Rabbit tried to sneak away into the bushes, but Mr. Bear called to him, and he came

forward timidly, bobbed his head, and said, "Good morning," in his faint little voice.

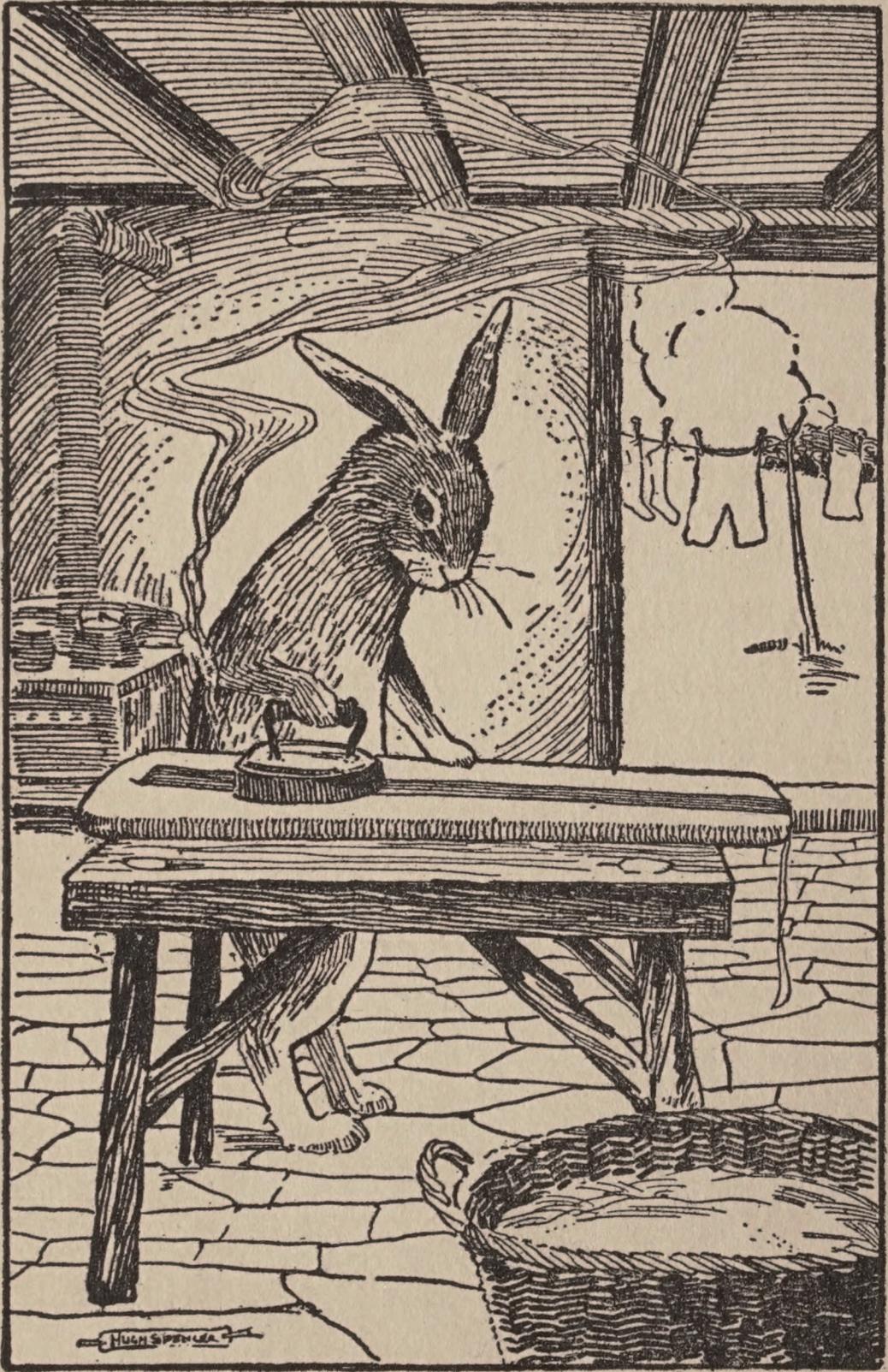
"Good morning, Mr. Rabbit," said Mr. Bear kindly. "You haven't seen Sammy and Sally, have you?"

Mr. Rabbit shook his head and began to whimper.

"O, Mr. Bear," he said, "what do you suppose can have happened? I've hidden in the bushes beside the Wood Road every day and watched for them to go by, but I haven't seen them now for more than two weeks, and they used to come every day or two."

Mr. Bear shook his head. "I can't stand it any longer," he said. "I've just got to find out what has become of Sammy and Sally."

Early next morning, before the sun



He took it home and ironed it before he put
it on again.

was up, while the valley was still full of white mist, and only the earliest birds were stirring and chirping sleepily in the bushes, Mr. Bear trotted silently out of the Wood Road and turned toward the big, white farm-house where Sammy and Sally lived. His shaggy, black coat was wet with dew from the bushes, and his big paws padded softly in the white dust of the road.

Sammy had got up very early and dressed himself that morning. All night long he had heard his Mother and the Doctor stirring about in the next room where Sally lay sick. He had been crying because they would not let him go in to see his little sister. He opened the front door and went down the path between his Mother's flower beds just as the first rays of the sun be-

gan to shine over the hills and dry up the mist in the meadow.

Down by the white gate he saw something big and black that went "Snuffle, Snuffle" and fumbled at the latch. The gate shook and rattled in the still morning air.

Sammy ran down the path between the flower beds, and opened the gate.

"O, Mr. Bear, Mr. Bear," he whispered, "I'm so glad you have come. Sally is sick."

Mr. Bear sat down by the gate and looked at Sammy. Then he looked doubtfully at the big, silent farm-house. Mr. Bear felt very strange sitting there at the gate, so far away from the woods.

"Is she very sick?" he asked. "Can I see her?"

Sammy shook his head. "She's very

sick," he said. "I don't know whether she will ever get better. You can't see her; I can't see her. Nobody can see her but mother and the doctor."

Sammy's lip trembled, and there were tears in his eyes.

"Don't cry, Sammy," said Mr. Bear, although he looked ready to cry himself. "I'll go and see Doctor Porcupine, and then I'll come again and tell you what he says."

Mr. Bear straightened up, and tried to look very brave.

"I think she will get better, Sammy," he said, "and you must try to think so, too."

They could hear Mary, the cook, beginning to stir about in the kitchen at the back of the house, and out in the

stable the horses were tramping in their stalls.

“I’ll have to be going, Sammy,” said Mr. Bear.

“Yes,” said Sammy, “somebody might see you here, and they wouldn’t understand.”

“Good-bye,” said Mr. Bear.

“Good-bye,” said Sammy, “and thank you for coming.” He tried to smile bravely, and Mr. Bear trotted off slowly and sadly toward the Wood Road.

The sun was already shining bright and warm among the tree tops, and the woods were alive with the songs of birds when Mr. Bear passed the blueberry patch, and came to the clearing where he had called the animals together that day when Sammy first came into the woods. He trotted along slowly, think-

ing very hard. When he came to the clearing, he turned in, under the old apple tree, picked up a stick, and rapped three times on the big, hollow trunk.

The clearing was empty and silent, but Mr. Bear had only a few minutes to wait. Every animal in the woods had been waiting for Sammy and Sally, and wondering why they didn't come; and when Mr. Bear's signal sounded sharply through the woods, they knew why he was calling them together.

This time, it was old Mr. Rabbit who came first, hopping through the bushes into the clearing like a timid little ghost. He had his pink hair ribbon tied carefully about his neck in a big bow, and he crept silently under a bush without a word, and waited. Then with many

little rustling sounds among the bushes, the animals began to come out of the little paths about the clearing. Many little bright-eyed birds flitted through the trees, and perched silently on the near-by branches. Last of all came Doctor Porcupine out of breath with running, for he was a very busy doctor, and had been gathering snake root in the farthest edge of the woods.

Once again the clearing was alive with little furry bodies, and little bright-eyed birds who waited silently for Mr. Bear to speak. But this time no little boy sat under the apple tree, looking bravely back at them with wondering eyes. And every bird and every animal, even Mr. Fox, felt lonely, and knew that something was wrong.

Mr. Bear stood up and looked

solemnly about him. Even the little red squirrel on a branch over Mr. Bear's head was quiet and forgot to tease his big, gray brother.

"Sally Sassafras is sick," said Mr. Bear, sadly, "very sick. I talked with Sammy this morning, and the doctor says she may never get well again!"

Mr. Bear stopped and looked at Doctor Porcupine, and all the other animals turned silently and looked at him, too.

Doctor Porcupine sat up, and took out his horn spectacles from the little pocket among his quills. He set them on his nose and looked solemnly at Mr. Bear.

"How long has she been sick?" said Doctor Porcupine.

"More than two weeks," said Mr. Bear, "and now they won't let anybody

see her but her mother and the doctor.”

Doctor Porcupine shook his head. He was a very cheerful doctor, but now he looked very sad and mournful. Old Mr. Rabbit was crying and whimpering to himself under his bush at the edge of the clearing, but no one paid any attention to him.

“I’m afraid we can’t do anything to help her,” said Doctor Porcupine, at last, “unless——”

Doctor Porcupine stopped and looked thoughtfully about him at all the animals. Mr. Owl in the trunk of the old apple tree opened his eyes and looked about him, too——

“Unless,” went on Doctor Porcupine, “unless somebody will go and get the Wood Fairy.”

There was a little stir all about the

clearing as the animals whispered quietly to each other.

Mr. Bear nodded his head. "I've heard about the Wood Fairy," he said, "but where does she live, and who can go to find her?"

"Only the swiftest animal in the woods can go," said Doctor Porcupine, "and I can only tell you this:

"You start at noon and run all day long, into the West after the setting sun. And when the night comes, you keep running into the West, away from the rising moon. And then, at midnight, when the moon is straight above your head, and if you have never stopped for one instant for weariness or pain, and if you have a brave, kind heart, you will come to the home of the Wood Fairy."

"Yes," said Mr. Owl from the trunk

of the apple tree, "that is true. The fastest feet in the woods, and a brave, kind heart."

Mr. Bear looked about him. "Who can go? Who can go?" he said to himself.

"The fastest feet in the woods," he said, and he looked doubtfully at Mr. Fox, who hung his head and looked ashamed.

And then out from under his bush, into the middle of the clearing came old Mr. Rabbit, and all the animals watched him in surprise. They stopped whispering to each other, and a silence fell upon the clearing so still that you could hear the grasshoppers and beetles stirring in the grass.

Mr. Rabbit looked timidly about him. He looked up at the sun which had

climbed steadily into the sky and shone down nearly straight into the clearing.

“I am going,” said old Mr. Rabbit.
“I am going.”

“It is nearly noon, and I can run as fast as Mr. Fox. I will never stop for pain or weariness; and I love Sally and Sammy.”

Old Mr. Rabbit looked up once more at the sun which was climbing higher every minute into the sky. He looked about him at all the animals who watched him with wondering eyes.

“If I don’t find the Wood Fairy,” he said, “or if she will not listen to me, I won’t come back and you will never see me again.”

Old Mr. Rabbit hopped to the edge of the clearing, and looked once more at the sun. “Good-bye,” he said.

“Good-bye,” said Mr. Bear. “It is noon, and you must start. You had better give me your pink ribbon to keep for you until you come back.”

But old Mr. Rabbit shook his head. “No,” he said, “I couldn’t go without my ribbon. I didn’t steal it; Sally gave it to me.”

He cleared the Wood Road in one leap, and was gone like a white streak among the trees.

The sun shone clear and hot among the bushes as Mr. Rabbit ran through the swamp. He leaped light and sure-footed between the bushes of swamp azaleas, and across the pools of deep, black mud where Sally and Sammy had stumbled and floundered on that day when they crossed the swamp. He

cleared the little brook at a bound and flew up the rocky hillside.

Mrs. Bear and the baby Bears had barely time to see him as he passed their house; and they wondered where old Mr. Rabbit could be going.

Down the other side of the hill went Mr. Rabbit, past his old ruined house. He crossed two more valleys and began to climb the further range of hills where Mr. Catamount lived. This was a deep, wild wood with tangled under brush and fallen trees. Mr. Rabbit was getting tired, but he breasted the hill bravely, leaping over the fallen logs. Once he thought he saw the lean tawny form of big Mr. Catamount stretched out in the shade, lifting his head in surprise to see a little animal who dared to come into his woods.

But old Mr. Rabbit raced on.

The sun went down into the West, and after it ran Mr. Rabbit. His feet were sore, and his ears were torn and bleeding from the briars. Down through the darkening valleys he raced, and over the ranges of hills, weary of foot, sore and aching in every joint. His pink ribbon hung limp and draggled about his neck.

The red glow of the sunset faded, and darkness fell among the woods. The stars began to shine in the pale sky above the tree tops. Behind him, in the east, the big, silver moon climbed slowly above the hills. And old Mr. Rabbit, half dead from weariness and pain and fright, never stopped, but ran and ran and ran, away from the rising moon, into the West.

All about him in the darkness, the



Old Mr. Rabbit ran and ran and ran into the West.

night noises sounded among the bushes. Over his head, flitted the bats, and the night birds rustled in the bushes as he passed. Far away across the valleys, a whip-poor-will called faintly, again and again through the night. High up among the trees, a screech owl cried to frighten him as he passed.

He did not know through what strange country he was passing. It seemed all brambles and stones and darkness. Endless rocky hills to climb, with endless alder swamps between. He only knew that somewhere in the West, a brave, kind heart, and the fastest feet in the woods, that never stopped for weariness or pain, would find at last, the Wood Fairy to help a little girl, whom old Mr. Rabbit loved.

Higher and higher climbed the big,

silver moon, shining among the tree-tops and over the bushes in the open valleys. And under its pale light which only made the shadows deeper and more terrible, a ragged old Rabbit, torn and bleeding, and half dead with weariness, stumbled and struggled on through the darkness to save a little girl who had given him a pink hair ribbon.

Midnight had come. Straight over old Mr. Rabbit's head the big, silver moon looked down at him. He dragged himself across a rocky plain, and at the further side a pine grove stood, black and silent in the moonlight. He could hardly crawl ahead, but he knew that it was midnight and he must not stop now; and at last he crept into the black shadow of the pine trees.

In that pine grove was such darkness

and silence and coolness as old Mr. Rabbit had never felt. A little strength came back into his tired, battered, old body. He stumbled on, deeper and deeper among the trees, and at last he came to an opening like a great, dark room in the very center of the grove. Around it, pine trees stood like a wall with their tall tops reaching up into the moonlight. The thick grass, wet with dew, was like a soft carpet underneath. In the middle of the clearing, with the silver moonlight shining upon it, stood the hollow trunk of an old dead tree. All about it, countless fireflies crept and clung among the tall grass, shining like a thousand candles.

Old Mr. Rabbit had come at last to the home of the Wood Fairy.

Shivering and trembling, he crept

across the clearing. The fireflies glowed about him, and clung to his wet, draggled fur, as he crouched down at the foot of the hollow tree.

Within the trunk, a faint, little voice was singing a fairy song, and the fireflies crept closer and glowed brighter as they listened.

Old Mr. Rabbit lay at the foot of the tree, trembling and sobbing:

“Wood Fairy,” he said faintly, “it’s me, old Mr. Rabbit. Sally Sassafras is sick, and I have come to tell you.”

The sweet, faint singing stopped. Old Mr. Rabbit listened, trembling.

“Give me your pink hair ribbon,” said the little voice, “and I will go.”

Old Mr. Rabbit thought more of his pink ribbon than anything else in the world. But he tugged and fumbled at

it until he got it untied. Just over his head there was a little opening in the tree trunk. He raised himself wearily, held up the ribbon, and in a moment it had disappeared within the hollow tree.

Old Mr. Rabbit sank down into the tall grass, feeling that he could never stir again. But his heart was full of happiness and peace. For swift and silent, and shining faintly like one of the fireflies, the Wood Fairy flew away above the tree-tops straight to Sally's house.

* * * *

All day long, after old Mr. Rabbit had gone to find the Wood Fairy, Mr. Bear wandered up and down the Wood Road. That night, he scarcely slept. He and Mrs. Bear kept getting up and

going to the door to watch and listen. All the next day they waited and all the animals and birds searched through the woods for old Mr. Rabbit. But when the night came he had not returned. Mr. Bear went to bed at last, tired and discouraged, and went to sleep.

He was awakened by a faint little scratching at the door. He opened his eyes and saw that it was morning. The first daylight shone faintly through the windows as Mr. Bear jumped out of bed and opened the door. Something limp and draggled and motionless lay huddled on the door-step. Old Mr. Rabbit had come back.

Mr. Bear picked him up and carried him into the house. His eyes were shut, he was torn and battered, and his pink ribbon was gone.

Mrs. Bear put clean sheets on the big bed where she and Mr. Bear slept, and they laid old Mr. Rabbit down and covered him with a blanket. Then Mr. Bear ran for Doctor Porcupine.

When Doctor Porcupine arrived, he jumped up on the bed beside Mr. Rabbit and felt his pulse. He put down his head, listened to the beat of Mr. Rabbit's heart, and felt of him all over. Mr. and Mrs. Bear stood beside the bed, watching anxiously. The baby Bears were still sound asleep in the other bed.

Doctor Porcupine jumped down and opened his shiny black case.

"Utterly exhausted," he said. "Nearly starved. One leg broken. Lucky he could get to your house. Did he find the Wood Fairy?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Bear, "but

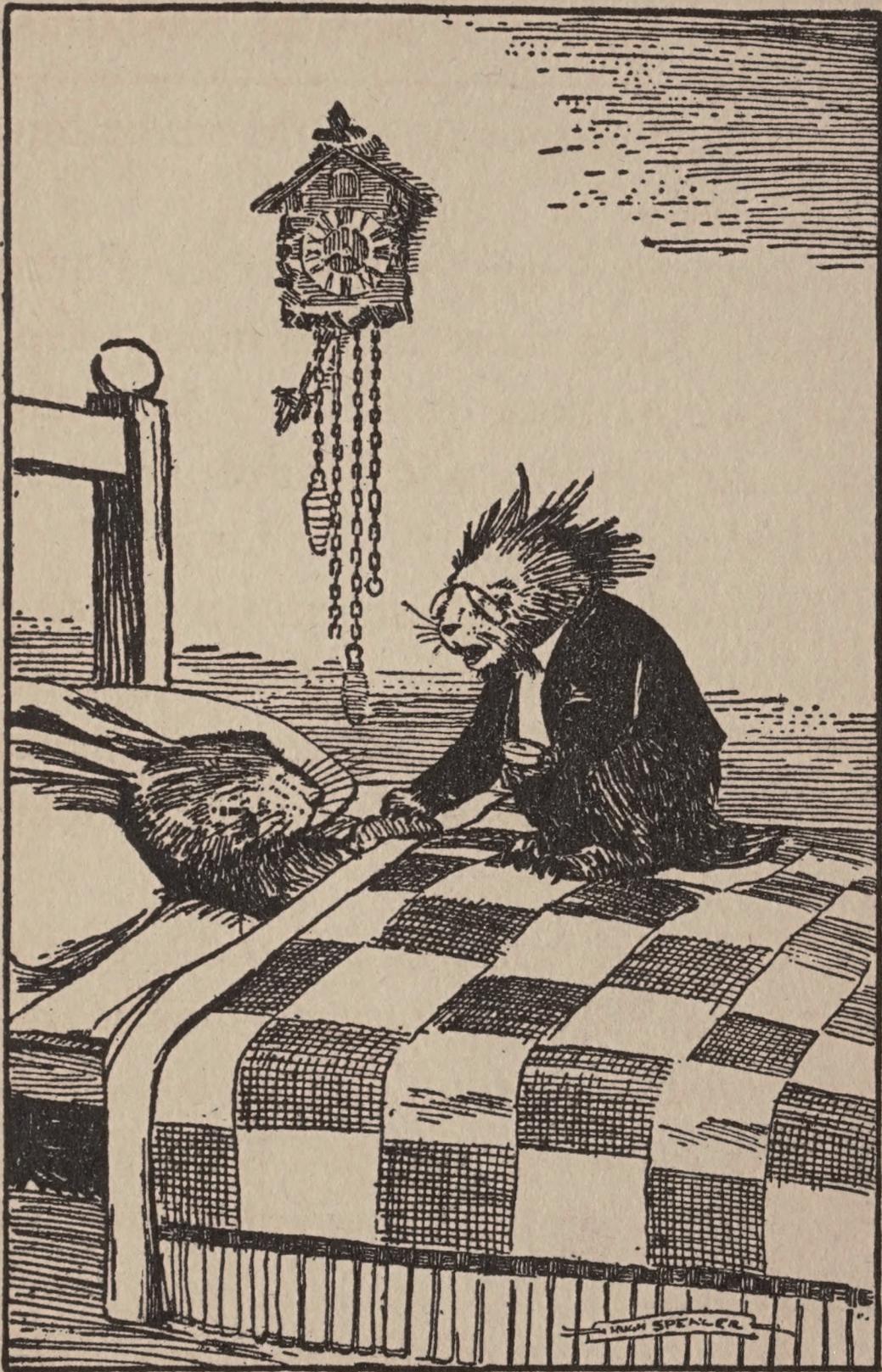
I think he did, or he would never have come back.”

“Let him sleep,” said Doctor Porcupine. “Keep those babies quiet. Give him two of these pills when he wakes up, and rub this witch hazel ointment on his cuts. Now I’ll set his leg.”

He took two splints and a bandage from his case, and tied up Mr. Rabbit’s leg. Old Mr. Rabbit stirred and whimpered when Doctor Porcupine touched it.

“Give him some gruel and a cup of hot hemlock tea when he wakes up,” said Doctor Porcupine. “To-morrow, he can eat all he wants. Keep him in bed for a week. I’ll come again this afternoon.”

Mrs. Bear smoothed the pillow under old Mr. Rabbit’s head. “I’ll take good



When Doctor Porcupine arrived, he jumped up on the bed beside Mr. Rabbit and felt his pulse.

care of him," she said. "He deserves it."

It was broad daylight now, and the sun was shining high above the tree-tops. Mr. Bear and Doctor Porcupine trotted rapidly through the long, crooked path, across the valley and out into the Wood Road. There was no need to call the animals together. Mr. Muskrat and Mr. Mink had come up from the Big Pond, and were waiting at the end of Mr. Bear's path. Mr. Fox joined them at the clearing, and by the time they reached the blueberry patch, the Wood Road was filled with animals and all the birds were flitting beside them in the bushes.

Up the Wood Road, under the cool shade of the pine trees, went the whole procession, big, black Mr. Bear at their

head. And suddenly through the still morning air they heard the sound of childish voices. Sammy and Sally came running down the Wood Road hand in hand, laughing and calling through the woods for Mr. Bear.

CHAPTER VIII

THE END OF THE STORY

NOW these are all the adventures of Sammy Sassafras and his little sister Sally that I am going to tell you in this book. But perhaps you would like to know what became of old Mr. Rabbit, so I will tell you that.

Mrs. Bear took such good care of him, and Doctor Porcupine gave him such fine medicine that he was soon quite well again. His broken leg kept him in bed at Mr. Bear's house for a couple of weeks, and Sammy and Sally came to see him every day.

Sally gave him a new pink ribbon, and tied it about his neck herself, and

kissed him as he sat propped up with pillows in Mr. Bear's big bed. Sammy brought him lettuce and tender little carrots from the kitchen garden.

Old Mr. Rabbit was still very shy, and you could not get him to tell the story of his journey to the home of the Wood Fairy. When anyone told how brave and kind he had been, he used to turn his face to the wall, and make believe he was asleep.

But he grew very fat and sleek with all the fine things Mrs. Bear cooked for him, and all the dainties that the other animals brought him. Even Mr. Fox brought him a big, red apple, and tried to make himself agreeable.

When his broken leg was healed, Mr. Rabbit hopped back to his house beside Doctor Porcupine's grove, but he had

grown so fat, that he could hardly squeeze through his long, narrow burrow. Mr. Woodchuck and Mr. Skunk came and dug it larger for him. The other animals came so often to visit him, that they soon made a path into the thicket where he lived. Mr. Bear helped him to clear away the bushes about his front door, so that now he has a fine place to sit in the sun and watch for Sammy and Sally when they come to call on him.

To this day he has never stolen anything again, and now when you meet him in the woods, he sits up and looks at you with his pink ribbon tied about his neck, and bids you good-morning, instead of sneaking off into the bushes as he used to do in the old days when he was a thief.

Doctor Porcupine is still bustling around with his little, black, shiny, medicine case, and is considered the finest doctor in the woods for stone bruises, bumblebee stings, and thorns in the feet.

Mr. Muskrat and Mr. Mink have made up their quarrel. Now, when Sammy and Sally row out to the island in the big pond, Mr. Muskrat and Mr. Mink swim over together, and take lunch with them.

So far as I know, all the animals are still living happily about the Wood Road. The last time I went through there, I met Jerry, the older one of the baby Bears, and he had grown so big that for a moment I thought it was Mr. Bear himself.

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